

Prayers To Restore The Soul

Rocky Road

Marlene sat perched, about seven feet plus off the ground. Uneasily, she grappled with the leather reins with her one hand while holding onto the saddle horn with her other. What exactly had the guide instructed them before they mounted? Don't rely on the saddle to keep you upright, use your legs, balance your body equally on his back and learn to anticipate your horse's intentions.

Marlene really did want to go on this ride with her three closest friends. But as soon as the guide leader began his spiel on the basic dos and don'ts of horsemanship, Marlene had felt a tremor of trepidation run through her. How hard can it be, she persisted. We're walking in a straight line through the mountains with guides at both the head and rear.

Still, once the stable hand helped ease Marlene onto her saddle, she felt stricken. I don't know if I can do this, safely, that is. Let's see, I have to make sure the horse knows I'm the boss, I can't let him eat anything once we get on the trail, and the big no-no is allowing him to get too close to the mount in front of us. Or else. Marlene gulped; she certainly did not want to be kicked by an irritated two thousand pound beast sporting iron shoes. Before Marlene could change her mind and beg off the four-hour trip, the guide whistled and her horse seemed to know his business and trekked down the dusty side path.

Marlene paid diligent attention to her horse's every movement. While the horses in front of her nibbled the leaves from the surrounding trees, thus halting the group's progression, Marlene kept her horse on the straight and narrow. When they arrived at a stream, Marlene got her horse through without him stopping for a drink, another small, but satisfying accomplishment. Over, around, up and down the rocky paths they rode until Marlene's knees and backside ached. Finally, they arrived at the halfway point; a stunning waterfall awaited them where the horses could ease their burdens and Marlene could stretch and walk off her soreness.

Given the twenty minutes of off time, Marlene made her way to the bottom of the gorge and sat perched on a log. She closed her eyes and heard only the cascading of the water as it rushed downstream. Marlene breathed deeply of the misty air and the scents of summer engulfed her senses. How I wish the entire trip was as carefree as this. How I wish life were like this. Listen, just listen, she took herself firmly in hand; drink in the wonder of this magical place while you still have opportunity. And so she did.

"The afflicted and needy are seeking water, but there is none. And their tongue is parched with thirst; I, the Lord, will answer them myself, As the God of Israel I will not forsake them." — Isaiah 41: 17, 18

Dear Lord,

May I come into Your presence and simply sit in silence? I only want to drink in the goodness of Your love and let nothing come between our communion. Please set a hedge around us

now, and clear my heart and mind from any lingering thoughts of the cares from today. Wash me anew with Your Holy Spirit and purify me through and through. I pray that You would offer me a fresh awareness of Your constancy and care in my life. Let me be fully alive toward You and dead toward my selfish nature.

Lord, I feel so needy in my soul. I am so frequently distracted and distraught by life's pressures. Far too often, I neglect our relationship. In truth, I forfeit it in favor of lesser pursuits. Please forgive my shortsightedness. Envelop me in Your faithful love and bring a new sense of vision to me now I count only upon You to bring me to the place of faithful restfulness.

Lord, as Your child I am such a slow learner, yet I long to hear Your voice above all others. Clear away the clamor, and give me what I require to be a selective listener... hearing Your call alone. Amen.

"Whether our failure was simple carelessness, the inability to perform up to standard, or the seemingly random strike of circumstances, we need to refuse to let it define us for the rest of our lives. We can let it become a page in our journal but never a reflection in the mirror."

— Michele Howe, author of two new books: *"Still Going it Alone: Mothering with Faith and Finesse When the Children Have Grown"* (by Hendrickson Publishing) and *"Faith, Friends and Other Flotation Devices."*